well. The contrary is the case when the man allies himself with a woman above him and thereby faces the alternative of curbing either his rights or his gratitude and of being either ungrateful or despised. Then the woman, pretending to authority, acts as a tyrant toward the head of the house, and the master becomes a slave and finds himself the most ridiculous and most miserable of creatures. Such are those unfortunate favorites whom the Asian kings honor and torment by marrying them to their daughters, and who are said to dare to approach only from the foot of the bed in order to sleep with their wives.

I expect that many readers, remembering that I ascribe to woman a natural talent for governing man, will accuse me of a contradiction here. They will, however, be mistaken. There is quite a difference between arrogating to oneself the right to command and governing him who commands. Woman's empire is an empire of gentleness, skill, and obligingness; her orders are caresses, her threats are tears. She ought to reign in the home as a minister does in a state—by getting herself commanded to do what she wants to do. In this sense, the best households are invariably those where the woman has the most authority. But when she fails to recognize the voice of the head of the house, when she wants to usurp his rights and be in command herself, the result of this disorder is never anything but misery, scandal, and dishonor.

There remains the choice between one's equals and one's inferiors; and I believe that some restriction must be placed upon the latter, for it is difficult to find among the dregs of the people a wife capable of making a gentleman happy. It is not that they are more vicious in the lowest rank than in the highest, but that they have few ideas of what is beautiful and decent, and that the injustice of the other estates makes the lowest see justice in its very vices.

By nature man hardly thinks. To think is an art he learns like all the others and with even more difficulty. In regard to relations between the two sexes, I know of only two classes which are separated by a real distinction—one composed of people who think, the other of people who do not think; and this difference comes almost entirely from education. A man from the first of these two classes ought not to make an alliance in the other, for the greatest charm of society is lacking to him when, despite having a wife, he is reduced to thinking alone. People who literally spend their whole lives working in order to live have no idea other than that of their work or their self-interest, and their whole mind seems to be at the end of their arms. This ignorance harms neither probity nor morals. Often it even serves them. Often one commences in regard to one's duties by dint of reflecting on them and ends up replacing real things with abstract talk. Conscience is the most enlightened of philosophers. One does not need to know Cicero's *Offices* to be a good man, and the most decent woman in the world perhaps has the least knowledge of what decency is. But it is no less true that only a cultivated mind makes association agreeable, and it is a sad thing for a father of a family who enjoys himself in his home to be forced to close himself up and not be able to make himself understood by anyone.

Besides, how will a woman who has no habit of reflecting raise her

children? How will she discern what suits them? How will she incline them toward virtues she does not know, toward merit of which she has no idea? She will know only how to flatter or threaten them, to make them insolent or fearful. She will make mannered monkeys or giddy rascals of them, never good minds or lovable children.

Therefore, it is not suitable for a man with education to take a wife who has none, or, consequently, to take a wife from a rank in which she could not have an education. But I would still like a simple and coarsely raised girl a hundred times better than a learned and brilliant one who would come to establish in my house a tribunal of literature over which she would preside. A brilliant wife is a plague to her husband, her children, her friends, her valets, everyone. From the sublime elevation of her fair genius she disdains all her woman's duties and always begins by making herself into a man after the fashion of Mademoiselle de l'Enclos. Outside her home she is always ridiculous and very justly criticized; this is the inevitable result as soon as one leaves one's station and is not fit for the station one wants to adopt. All these women of great talent never impress anyone but fools. It is always known who the artist or the friend is who holds the pen or the brush when they work. It is known who the discreet man of letters is who secretly dictates their oracles to them. All this charlatanry is unworthy of a decent woman. Even if she had some true talents, her pretensions would debase them. Her dignity consists in her being ignored. Her glory is in her husband's esteem. Her pleasures are in the happiness of her family. Readers, I leave it to you. Answer in good faith. What gives you a better opinion of a woman on entering her room, what makes you approach her with more respect—to see her occupied with the labors of her sex and the cares of her household, encompassed by her children's things, or to find her at her dressing table writing verses, surrounded by all sorts of pamphlets and letters written on tinted paper? Every literary maiden would remain a maiden for her whole life if there were only sensible men in this world:

Quaeris cur nolim te ducere, Galla? diserta es.[34]

After these considerations comes that of looks. It is the first consideration which strikes one and the last to which one ought to pay attention, but still it should count for something. Great beauty appears to me to be avoided rather than sought in marriage. Beauty promptly wears out in possession. After six weeks it is nothing more for the possessor, but its dangers last as long as it does. Unless a beautiful woman is an angel, her husband is the unhappiest of men; and even if she were an angel, how will she prevent his being ceaselessly surrounded by enemies? If extreme ugliness were not disgusting, I would prefer it to extreme beauty; for in a short time both are nothing for the husband, and thus beauty becomes a drawback and ugliness an advantage. But ugliness which produces disgust is the greatest of misfortunes. This sentiment, far from fading away, increases constantly and turns into hatred. Such a marriage is a hell. It would be better to be dead than to be thus united.